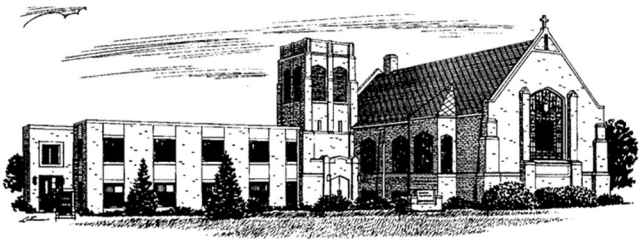
SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085



Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (began Sept 10):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer (begins May 26, 2024):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*

PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR NOVEMBER 2023

Like many of you, I've been thinking about gratitude. We've spent the last six-weeks with gratitude as an emphasis of our stewardship season. November is a month of thanksgiving. So, what is it that I am grateful for? Here's a start, and just a start…

Thanks be to God -

For all of you who "simply" show up - whether at worship, a service project, a Bible study, or another activity. Your presence is valued. You are valued.

For all of you who, for whatever reason, do not show up - whether because of distance, health, or whatever else keeps you away. Know that you are cared for. You are valued.

For all who volunteer - whether leading, facilitating, teaching, singing, playing bells or another musical instrument, cleaning, repairing, visiting, or participating in any way. Your efforts are appreciated. You are valued.

For you who are staff - Marcus, Irma, Amanda, Megan, and Sara. You make my job easier. You enhance Saron's ministry. You are valued.

For our younger generation - and all who wonder. You spread joy through your smiles and curiosity. You are valued.

For those who are older - and (often) wiser. You offer insight and understanding stemming from your experiences. You are valued.

For each one of you who reads this article - we need each other. None of us can do this thing called "church" alone. We are better together. You are valued.

For Jesus - who values you (and me) more than I could ever manage; whose life, death, and resurrection are central to who we are as the people of God; whose love shows no end; who calls us to "*joyfully share that love for and with all!!!*"

- In Christ's love and gratitude, Pastor Joan

Tuesday
November 21
7pm

Will also be available via Zoom

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 9am-noon
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at the Willows in St. Joseph.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

11/1 Suzy Kohs
11/2 Eric Burrow
11/2 Merrily Smith
11/4 Sterling Carter
11/4 Laurel Gacek
11/4 Laura Stark
11/7 Meredith Gacek
11/13 Carter Hohman
11/15 Coanne Hohman
11/17 Dawn Osgood
11/17 Marcus Roll
11/18 Mark Wedde
11/19 Brent Dipert
11/19 Tom Taylor
11/20 Christopher Gaspari
11/25 David Lundgren
11/26 Mary Streufert
11/27 Erik Bergh
11/28 Emily Gaul
11/28 Melanie McCammon
11/30 Denise Cook

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

11/1 Kelli & Ryan Christman
11/11 Aaron & Betsy Becker
11/21 Deborah & Mark Vollmer
11/22 John & Kerrie Hoodlebrink
11/22 Walter & Sally Schmuhl

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

IN SYMPATHY

We offer our condolences to Philip, and the entire family, upon the death of his wife,

Kathleen Preston

a long-time member of Saron, on October 20, 2023. Visitation with Kathleen's family will be Tuesday, November 7 at 10am, followed by a memorial service at 11am at Saron.

God is our refuge and strength.
- Psalm 46:1a

CONGRATULATIONS

Introducing Molly Joan Hooper, born August 9, 2023. Big brother Elliot is in love and so are parents Katie & Nick Hooper! Proud grandparents are Judi & Rian Huff.

Introducing Calvin Howard Wallace, born October 10, 2023. This little guy is the son of John & Jane Wallace and grandson of Kate & Joe Ulrey.

Now that the initial tech and worship enhancement projects in the narthex are complete, we will look at the next layer of those two categories plus pursue other items remaining on the master list, such as other indoor and outdoor improvements which could include potential signage, lighting, and painting projects.

As always, thank you for being with us on this journey and know that we will keep you informed until all projects are complete and all the money has been responsibly spent.

Worship

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we now have Sensory Bags available for use during worship or at other times when helpful. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made confidentially online via a link in our Thursday mailings. You may include as much detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are also invited to be part of the Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes. If you want to know more about this ministry, please contact Pastor Joan.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday Zoom Coffee Hour at 11am as long as there is interest. All are welcome!

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then **simply return the vase to Saron.**

FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page. We do not put names with the pictures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Pastor.

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

We are always looking for new volunteers to help share the load. Contact Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464) with any questions or interest.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

November 5: All Saints Day
Revelation 7:9-17
Psalm 34:1-10, 22
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

November 12: 24th Sunday after Pentecost
Amos 5:18-24
Psalm 70
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

November 19: 25th Sunday after Pentecost
Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18
Psalm 90:1-8
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Matthew 25:14-30

November 26: Christ the King Sunday
Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Psalm 95:1-7
Ephesians 1:15-23
Matthew 25:31-46

YOUTH GROUP

Our youth group (middle school and high school kids) typically meets once per month after the service for food, fun and fellowship. Watch your email for more information on the next gathering. Friends are always welcome!

Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

Our program year is underway. We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

During November, the Tuesday evening Bible study group will continue exploring the Old Testament book of Job using the resource book, “Job – Trusting God in Suffering," by John MacArthur (available in paperback or Kindle version from Amazon). Understanding what it was like for Job to unknowingly be caught in a battle between God and Satan will perhaps help us discover how to deal with seemingly unfair adversities in our own lives. Hope you can join us!

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6pm** in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. **All are welcome!**

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Our study on Mark continues through November 9. All are welcome to this study, which meets Thursdays from 9:30am-11am in the upstairs lounge. You can join in at any time, for one session or many. Questions? Contact Pastor Joan.

What Do You *Really* Believe?

We will meet November 1 and 15 at 7pm this month and we are planning something a little different. Most of us have our opinions about a variety ideas and issues; public and individual, religious and secular, important and some more insignificant. But how many of us have actually taken the time to examine these opinions and develop them into more reasoned beliefs? Just as importantly, how often do we pause to listen, without rebuttal or criticism, to the deeply held beliefs of those around us?

In the 1950s, journalist Ed Murrow introduced the idea of people developing key ideas through *This I Believe* essays. In the early 2000s, NPR resurrected the idea and shared many voices in radio broadcasts and in the book *This I believe, The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women.* The project was extended into a writing project for individuals and groups and can still be found online.

In our two November sessions, Claudia Staude, who used this project in her high school English classes in St. Louis, will be leading us through examples and opportunities to develop our own ‘this I believe’ statements and essays. This promises to be an enjoyable and mentally invigorating experience for all ages; individuals, couples, whole families. Everyone is welcome!

We typically meet at 7pm in the church lounge on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

November 5 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge is our next gathering. "Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved" by Kate Bowler is a non-fiction selection. The New York Times says: "A meditation on sense-making when there's no sense to be made, on letting go when we can't hold on, and being unafraid even when we are terrified." Very appropriate for our times.

Coming on December 3, is "The Thursday Murder Club" by Richard Osman. Book #1 of 4 and soon to be a movie by Steven Spielberg, four very different septuagenarians living in an upscale retirement community come together to sleuth and find out whodunit. Intelligent, witty and an homage to getting older.

Mark these dates and please join us for a good discussion and good company. All are welcome anytime. If you want to be included on our email list to receive reminders, updates and Zoom information, contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

"Just the knowledge that a good book is awaiting one at the end of a long day makes that day happier."
- Kathleen Norris

Women of the ELCA

SARON CHURCH WOMEN

We will meet on **Wednesday, November 8 at 7pm** in the church lounge for the **Annual Meeting**. Business matters will be discussed and voted upon. Thankoffering, as well as the other usual offerings, will be collected. Denise will prove Zoom with a link emailed closer to the meeting date. All women of Saron are welcome to attend.

If you have any questions,
contact Melanie at 269/449-8399.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

Lutheran World Relief

Saron Church Women thanks everyone who contributed items for Lutheran World Relief. The total was 55 personal care kits and 16 fabric kits. The shipping donation totaled $291.92. Thanks to Colleen Lundgren, Frieda Williams and Melanie McCammon for boxing up the kits. Thanks also to Mary Alice and Ed Brunner for transporting everything to the collection site in Portage. All donations are greatly appreciated and will be used by many people in need. Thanks, again, for supporting this project!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made, creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy. -Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On September 28, Jim Manore, Bob & Mary Kynast, and Kathie Bradley were busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing & serving 108 meals. Guests enjoyed a ham lunch which included potato salad, coleslaw, fruit, pickles, bread and homemade cookies. The cookie bakers this month were Fran Bolson, Kathi Anserello, Steve Bell and Mary Zylema.

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org
Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Actio is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

Support

The Support Committee typically meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

FALL CLEANUP

Saturday, November 4
9am - noon
(rain date of November 11)
Bring gloves, rakes, blowers, tarps and any other tools that might be helpful. Thank you for helping us maintain our beautiful grounds!

Other Bits of News

BURIAL PLOTS AVAILABLE

Are you, or someone you love, in need of a burial plot? Saron has been gifted with two adult plots, which can be divided, at **North Shore Memory Garden in Coloma**, as well as a niche for two end-to-end caskets in the Mausoleum. We are offering these at a reduced current value with proceeds going to the Endowment Fund. If interested, or you have questions, contact **Liz Kunkel (269/429-1132) or Pastor.**

Our financial secretary/bookkeeper, Megan, will be moving as her job has changed locations. Her plan is to help with the transition by training someone new to fill her position at Saron, making the year-end go smoothly. Do you or someone you know want to apply for the position? Contact Pastor Joan or Merrily Smith for more details. The position is part-time, presently a few hours each week, depending on the season.

Thank you to all those who attended our worship volunteer training sessions. If you were unable to attend but are interested in serving as an assisting minister, greeter, reader, post-service tidier or closer, contact Erik Bergh (906/290-3347) or Krin Jurgensen (269/369-4493).

We sincerely appreciate all the hard work that went into our fall 2023 Connecting with God stewardship effort. It took many people to pull off the weekly devotions, the Stewardship Moments during the services, the question of the week tree & Facebook posts, the indoor, outdoor & take-home prayer labyrinths, the Oktoberfest celebration, mailings, and more. AND it was worth the effort because of YOU, the participants! Thank you for sharing in this journey and for your prayers. This congregation's willingness to be open and vulnerable is extraordinary and we are more connected to each other and to God than ever before!

If you have not had a chance to turn in your 2024 commitment form, there is still time before we begin putting together the budget for next year. There are additional forms in the narthex or contact the church office if you need one mailed/emailed. Thank you!

REMINDER: Set any manual clocks back one hour before going to bed on Saturday, November 4!

To or not to ?

As Advent approaches, it's time to once again turn our attention to *ELCA Good Gifts!*

Vulnerable communities in Africa and other parts of the world continue to face food insecurity and famine. Strategies for dealing with this crisis focus on introducing regenerative agriculture practices that improve soil health, increase productivity, build climate resilience, and reduce reliance on synthetic fertilizers. To quote Farm Africa, "Growing maize and legumes and **keeping goats, pigs, poultry, and bees** are all resilience mechanisms, which ensure that if one source of income fails, people have another to fall back on." The ELCA Good Gifts animal Christmas tree ornament program joins with many other worldwide humanitarian efforts to provide appropriate agricultural resources where they are needed.

How can you help?

Last year during Advent, Saron sponsored 25 goats, 10 piglets, 17 honeybee colonies, and 32 broods of chicks. And then for Earth Day in April, we donated an entire water well and two water filters. While we can feel good about our past efforts, the need is still great and we can do more.

This year, from Advent (December 3rd) through the first Sunday after Epiphany (January 7th), you will have the opportunity to make donations for animal Christmas tree ornaments that will allow the ELCA to purchase and deliver the animal(s) of your choice to where it (they) will do the most good. We are again focusing on just four animal ornaments, but not just for simplicity. These four are best for the environment and will provide the most help to struggling families:

"If the bee disappeared off the face of the Earth, man would only have four years left to live. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man." – Albert Einstein

Goat – $50
Goats can go where other animals can't, surviving in some of the world's most challenging terrain.

Piglet – $30
Pigs provide natural fertilizer that helps crops grow tall and strong.

Honeybees – $20
Honeybees provide honey to eat and sell and **are essential to crop growth by pollinating plants**.

Chicks – $10
Eggs not only provide an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals – they can also help start a small business and generate a steady source of income.

While all four animals make worthy gifts, the smallest of these may have the biggest impact. So, when making your decisions this year, don't forget the honeybees! Think how nice <u>six</u> honeybee ornaments would look on your tree, and how much good those bees would do.

Look for an order form with instructions in the bulletin each week during Advent.

ELCA Good Gifts is your opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to you and the people you love. Saron Outreach

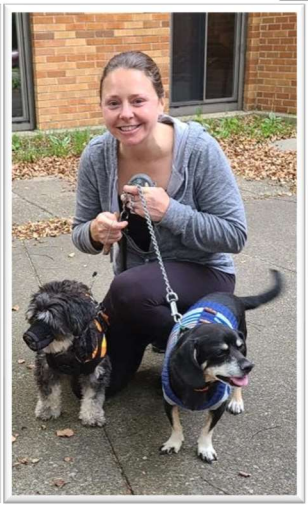
SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

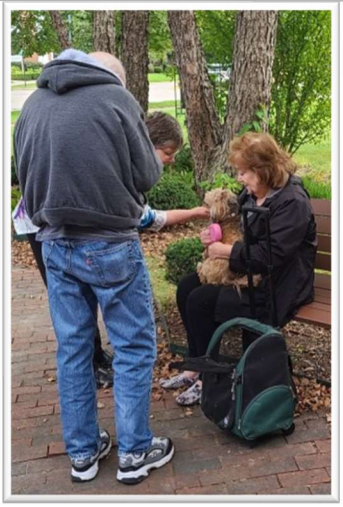
Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

NOVEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

A dozen + furry friends were blessed on a beautiful fall evening. Our capacity for love is limitless!





NOVEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**2**	**3**	**4** 9am Fall Cleanup
5 **ALL SAINTS SUNDAY** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**6** 11am Prayer Group	**7** 10am/11am Kathleen Preston Visitation/ Memorial Service 6pm Bible Study	**8** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Deborah Circle	**9** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**10**	**11**
12 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**13** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Church Council	**14** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting Pastor Out of Office →	**15** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**16** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**17**	**18** →
19 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option →	**20** 11am Prayer Group	**21** 6pm Bible Study 7pm Thanksgiving Worship with Zoom Option	**22** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**23** **Happy Thanksgiving!**	**24**	**25**
26 **CHRIST THE KING** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**27** 11am Prayer Group	**28** 6pm Bible Study	**29**	**30**		